



St. Augustine Institute of Science  
and  
Historical Society

St. Augustine  
Florida  
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114 Second Street  
Beach Haven  
New Jersey  
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Mr. Marral Ayres  
Old Spanish Trail Managing Director  
Mexxanine Floor, Gunter Hotel  
San Antonio, Texas.

My dear Mr. Ayres,

Your letter of August 18th. with enclosed article received to-day, and I shall be glad to act as consultant on old history, to the best of my ability. I do not like to depend on my memory, as I am liable to make mistakes and from May to November I am liable to be away from St. Augustine and our source material. This is my summer home where I am a legal resident and shall probably be here until October. I have a number of books and old pamphlets purchased for the Historical Society here now, that I expect to ship later and from them I shall give you a few items for your information. After you were in St. Augustine we secured from Spain and elsewhere a number of rare books and maps some of which have data on the subject of your article. We have had some translations made into English by Mr. Fred Acosta, a Spanish scholar, from Garcia's Spanish printing from Manuscript in 1902 for the first time of a Relation of Friar Miguel of a shipwreck on the coast of Florida in 1595 and the History of Menendez and settlement in Florida by Barrientos written I believe about 1574. The Relation of Friar Miguel gives an account of a Mission north of St. Augustine of the Franciscans and some mention of the Franciscans. In the "Gods Protecting Providence: the Shipwreck --- Canibals of Florida" journal of Jonathan Dickenson written 1696-1697 these missions north of St. Augustine are also described and nothing is said of their being built of stone, I feel sure they were of wood and so destroyed in 1728---1728---1740 in the various attacks by the English from South Carolina and Georgia. In St. Augustine however I find from the translation of a letter of the Governor in 1598 that he built a house of stone for the powder and has in a petition of an earlier date plenty for a fort. Friar Miguel states in 1595 all the houses in St. Augustine were of wood the best being built of boards. I have not yet read the Barrientos, it was translated after I left St. Augustine. In Philips book on the maps of Lowery, is the translation of a letter of a governor of St. Augustine 1605 in which he speaks of rebuilding the hospital of La Soledad and enlarging it and moving the sick back into it so that they will be safe from fire, for the place where they had been was built of wood and covered with palm. This infers that La Soledad was built of stone. La Soledad was the hermitage where the Franciscan Friars took refuge in 1599 when the large convent burned and they remained in it until their convent was rebuilt. I find in Tichnor that the Cofradia of La Soledad was formed in Spain in 1567 and was one of the two brotherhoods having charge of the plays given, the money, made supporting the city hospital. When the English came to Florida in 1763 they found one house with the date 1571 upon it. From the tradition connected with the Oldest House that it was a hermitage and chapel used by the Franciscans until they moved into the large convent I believe the Oldest House was La Soledad and that is what I am trying to trace back. The stone was put in between 1598 and 1605. It was not until 1690 after the present Fort was completed, that the residents were allowed to use stone for building we have the governor's letters describing how he rebuilt the official houses with stone, first floor stone to save the rest of the buildings. In the Journal or Jonathan Dickenson the Governor tells how poor they were, no ships for three years with supplies and I am positive that the stone ruins at New Smyrna and St. Mary's were built by the English, and are not old Catholic Missions. The old part of the State Arsenal on Charlotte St. is a part of the old Franciscan Mission of St. Helena as shown on the old maps 1763 and 1768. It was burned over